

## LESSON 9 STRUMS FOR GUITAR

In chapter {3}, we learned two strums (Thumb-Pluck and Thumb-Pluck-Pluck). This chapter introduces a few more. In this lesson, the following notation is used to indicate the type of notes used:

- (w) indicates a whole note.
- (h) indicates a half note.
- (q) indicates a quarter note.
- (e) indicates an eighth note.
- (s) indicates a sixteenth note.
- (q\*) indicates a dotted quarter note.
- (e\*) indicates a dotted eighth note, etc.

### FLAT PICKING STRUMS

This strum is often done using a flat pick (hence the name). In the list at the end of the chapter, it is strum number {3}. It will be taught here without a pick. The strum involves using the thumb of the right hand on the bass strings and the index finger alone brushing up or down on the other strings. The count for this strum is "1 and 2 and 1 and 2 and", or "1 A 2 A 1 A 2 A". On the first and third "A", no finger action is taken. The "A" is there to help with the timing. The notes on the Thumb strokes are quarter notes (q below tab). The other notes (on D,U) are eighth notes (e below tab).

```

|-----D-U-|-----D-U--|   String 1  (thinnest - highest pitch)
|-----D-U-|-----D-U--|
|-----D-U-|-----D-U--|
|-----|-----T-----|
|-----T-----|-----|
|-----|-----|   String 6  (thickest - lowest pitch)
3)      q   e e   q   e e
2/4)   1 A 2 A   1 A 2 A
```

You begin by plucking the primary bass string with your thumb, then you brush down (toward the ground) with the back (nail) of your index finger on strings 1,2 and 3 then back up with your index finger on the same strings. This is followed by the thumb on a different bass string and the down-up pattern again with the index finger. This is repeated endlessly (or until you get tired). Note that the "DOWN" and "UP" strokes are shown as "D" and "U" on the strings. The timing must be correct. It must follow the 1 A 2 A pattern.

After you get comfortable doing the strum, try it in a song. Remember to pause at chord changes, and concentrate on switching chords, then go back to concentrating on the strum. Normally chords will change right after completion of a whole strum. Don't worry if the pause seems too long. It will get shorter as you learn the strum.

The previous strum will later be useful for "flatpicking melody" style. That style involves playing the melody with the thumb, with down-ups thrown in as chord accompaniment. Note that strum number {4} is the 3/4 version of this strum.

A variation of the above strum is interesting. The strum is number {5} from the list at the end of the chapter.

```

|-----D-----U-D-U-|
|-----D-----U-D-U-|
|-----D-----U-D-U-|
|----T-----|
|-----T-----|
|-----|
5)   q   q   e e e e
4/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A 4 A

```

On the 1A2A the thumb hits a bass string on "1" then the index finger brushes down on "2". It is very important to keep the index finger pointing down at this point. The reason is that the index finger must be ready for its next action, which is an upstroke. Next the thumb plucks a different bass string on 3, then the index finger brushes UP-DOWN-UP on "A4A". At this point, the index finger should remain curled up. If you do not follow these tips, you may have a tendency to brush DOWN-UP-DOWN (a common problem as you learn this strum). If you are tapping your foot steadily to the beat, you should be tapping on the first thumb (1), the first DOWN (2), the second thumb (3) and the second DOWN (4). The two "UP" brushes must fit between the steady beat of 1,2,3,4.

NOTE: don't worry if you don't learn all the strums immediately. Do one at a time, and pick up other strums when you are ready. The main idea is to have fun. You have lots of time to learn new stuff.

## ARPEGGIOS

Arpeggios are strums in which you pluck individual strings separately. An example is shown below.

```

|-----R-|-----R---|           |-----R-----|-----R-----|
|-----M---|-----M-----|           |-----M---M---|-----M---M---|
|-----I-----|-----I-----|           |-----I-----I---|-----I-----I-|
|-----T-----|-----T-----|           |-----T-----|-----T-----|
|-----T-----|-----T-----|           |-----T-----|-----T-----|
|-----T-----|-----T-----|           |-----T-----|-----T-----|
11)   e e e e   e e e e           12)   e e e e e e   e e e e e e
2/4)  1 A 2 A   1 A 2 A           3/4)  1 A 2 A 3 A   1 A 2 A 3 A

```

In this strum (number 11), you alternate your thumb as in a Thumb-Pluck strum (chapter {3}). But instead of the Pluck, you use Index, Middle and Ring fingers, one after the other. The count is 1 A 2 A, with the Thumb and each finger as eighth notes. Strum 12 is a 3/4 version of the strum in which you use Index, Middle, Ring, Middle and Index fingers, one after the other.

At the end of the chapter are two other strums (13 and 14) which are combinations of a Thumb-Pluck(-Pluck) and arpeggios.

Below are three songs using arpeggios. **(Thumb-Pluck strum is shown for comparison.)**

## SKIP TO MY LOU (2/4, 1, S1F2) - Arpeggios (TIMR)

D

SKIP SKIP SKIP TO MY LOU  
TIMR TIMR TI---M--R TIMR <--arpeggio  
T-P T-P T----P T-P <--thumb pluck

A7

SKIP SKIP SKIP TO MY LOU  
TIMR TIMR TI---M--R TIMR <--arpeggio  
T-P T-P T----P T-P <--thumb pluck

D

SKIP SKIP SKIP TO MY LOU  
TIMR TIMR TI---M--R TIMR <--arpeggio  
T-P T-P T----P T-P <--thumb pluck

A7 D

SKIP TO MY LOU MY DAR- LING  
TI---M--R TI--MR TIMR TIMR TIMR <--arpeggio  
T----P T---P T-P T-P T-P <--thumb pluck

## DOWN IN THE VALLEY (3/4, 1, S5F0) - Arpeggios (TIMRMI)

D

A7

DOWN IN THE VAL - LEY, VALLEY SO LOW  
TIMRMI TI MR MI TIMRMI TIMRMI TI MR MI TIMRMI TIMRMI <--arpeggio  
TPP T-----P--P T-P-P T-P-P T---P---P T-P-P T-P-P <--thumb pluck

D

HANG YOUR HEAD O - VER, HEAR THE WIND BLOW  
TI MR MI TIMRMI TIMRMI TI MR MI TIMRMI TIMRMI <--arpeggio  
T-----P---P T-P-P T-P-P T---P---P T-P-P T-P-P <--thumb pluck

## AMAZING GRACE (3/4, 3, S2F0) - Arpeggios (TIMRMI)

E

E7

A

E

A - MAZING GRACE, HOW SWEET THE SOUND  
TIMRMI TIMR-MI TIMRMI TIMR---MI TIMR--MI TIMR-- <--arpeggio  
T-P-P T-P--P T-P-P T-P----P T-P----P T-P-- <--thumb pluck

B7

THAT SAVED A WRETCH LIKE ME  
--MI TIMR--MI TIMR---MI TIMRMI TIMR- <--arpeggio  
--P T-P---P T-P----P T-P-P T-P-- <--thumb pluck

E

E7

A

E

I ONCE WAS LOST AND NOW I'M FOUND  
--MI TIMR-MI TIMR-MI TIM-MI TIMR-- <--arpeggio  
--P T-P--P T-P--P T-P-P T-P-- <--thumb pluck

B7

E

WAS BLIND AND NOW I SEE  
--MI TIMR--MI TIMR-MI TIMRMI TIMR-- <--arpeggio  
--P T-P---P T-P--P T-P-P T-P-- <--thumb pluck

## USING HAMMER-ONS

In the next strum, a "HAMMER ON" is be used is to jazz up a strum. For example, strum number {5} of this lesson can be changed by adding a hammer on. The new strum in C chord is shown here and is strum number {6} at the end of the chapter. The hammer on is substituted for one of the "U"s.

The "HAMMER ON" may not work in some other chord, since the hammer (on string 4 fret 2) is a note in C chord, but may not be a note in some other chord. If you are playing F chord, do the thumb on string 4 and the hammer on, on string 3. For G7, do the thumb on string 6 and the hammer on, on string 5.

C	F	G7
-----D-----D-U--	-----D-----D-U--	-----D-----D-U--
-----D-----D-U--	-----D-----D-U--	-----D-----D-U--
-----D-----D-U--	-----D---0-H-2--D-U--	-----D-----D-U--
-----0-H-2-----	---T-----	-----
---T-----	-----	-----0-H-2-----
-----	-----	---T-----
6)    q    q    e    e    e    e	q    q    e    e    e    e	q    q    e    e    e    e
4/4) 1 A 2 A 3    A 4 A	1 A 2 A 3    A 4 A	1 A 2 A 3    A 4 A

## "TRAVIS" OR "COTTEN" PICKING STRUMS

In this section we will discuss strum number {7} from the list. Learning this strum will help later when you get into fingerpicking melody (lesson {12}).

First learn this easier strum which is very similar to the Travis Strum.

-----M-----M-----
-----I- -----I--
----- -----
-----T--- -----T---
-----T----- ---T-----
----- -----
e e e e    e e e e
4/4)    1 A 2 A    3 A 4 A

Note that the first and second parts of this strum are identical. In fact, the first part of the strum can be considered as a stand-alone strum. Learn the first part as a preparation for learning the Travis strum.

On the next page is the same strum except you do not play the first "M" on the first string, but do a pause there. The result is the Travis Strum.

Travis Strum.

V---pause

```

|-----*-----M-----|
|-----I-|-----I--|
|-----|-----|
|-----T---|-----T---|
|-----T-----|---T-----|
|-----|-----|
(7)      q   e e   e e e e
4/4)     1 A 2 A   3 A 4 A
  
```

SKIP TO MY LOU (in easier strum):

D

```

--- (M) -----M-----|----- (M) -----M-----
-----I-----I--|-----I-----I--
-----|-----|
-----T-----T---|-----T-----T---
-T-----T-----|---T-----T-----
-----|-----|
1 a   2 a   3 a   4 a   1 a   2 a   3 a   4 a
Skip           Skip   Skip   to my   Lou
  
```

A7

```

--- (M) -----M-----|----- (M) -----M-----
-----I-----I--|-----I-----I--
-----|-----|
-----T-----T---|-----T-----T---
-T-----T-----|---T-----T-----
-----|-----|
1 a   2 a   3 a   4 a   1 a   2 a   3 a   4 a
Skip           Skip   Skip   to my   Lou
  
```

D

```

--- (M) -----M-----|----- (M) -----M-----
-----I-----I--|-----I-----I--
-----|-----|
-----T-----T---|-----T-----T---
-T-----T-----|---T-----T-----
-----|-----|
1 a   2 a   3 a   4 a   1 a   2 a   3 a   4 a
Skip           Skip   Skip   to my   Lou
  
```

A7

D

```

--- (M) -----M-----|----- (M) -----M-----
-----I-----I--|-----I-----I--
-----|-----|
-----T-----T---|-----T-----T---
-T-----T-----|---T-----T-----
-----|-----|
1 a   2 a   3 a   4 a   1 a   2 a   3 a   4 a
Skip   to my Lou   my   Dar-           -lin'
  
```

If you learn the above strum, then the Travis Strum is identical except on the first (M) in parentheses. In the Travis Strum, you do not play the (M) middle finger actions, but instead do a pause.

Here is "Skip to my Lou" using the Travis Strum.

**SKIP TO MY LOU (with Travis Strum):**

D

```

--- (-)-----M-----|----- (-)-----M-----
-----I-----I---|-----I-----I---
-----T-----T-----|-----T-----T-----
-T-----T-----|---T-----T-----
-----|-----
1 a 2 a 3 a 4 a      1 a 2 a 3 a 4 a
Skip                Skip to my Lou

```

A7

```

--- (-)-----M-----|----- (-)-----M-----
-----I-----I---|-----I-----I---
-----T-----T-----|-----T-----T-----
-T-----T-----|---T-----T-----
-----|-----
1 a 2 a 3 a 4 a      1 a 2 a 3 a 4 a
Skip                Skip to my Lou

```

D

```

--- (-)-----M-----|----- (-)-----M-----
-----I-----I---|-----I-----I---
-----T-----T-----|-----T-----T-----
-T-----T-----|---T-----T-----
-----|-----
1 a 2 a 3 a 4 a      1 a 2 a 3 a 4 a
Skip                Skip to my Lou

```

A7

```

--- (-)-----M-----|----- D (-)-----M-----
-----I-----I---|-----I-----I---
-----T-----T-----|-----T-----T-----
-T-----T-----|---T-----T-----
-----|-----
1 a 2 a 3 a 4 a      1 a 2 a 3 a 4 a
Skip to my Lou my   Dar- -lin'

```



Another thing to think about is how you use your thumb when you play a strum. We have said that you should alternate your thumb on different bass strings for variety. One concept is that you start at the beginning of the song with your thumb on the "primary" string and alternate to a "secondary" string and back and forth. For various reasons, this is not always the best way to alternate the bass strings. For instance, if the first and second notes of the song are actually a secondary note followed by a primary note, it may sound odd to accompany this with primary-secondary. Maybe the best rule is to do what "sounds good".

Another way to increase the variety of your playing is to use more than two strings when you alternate your thumb on the bass strings. So far, we have shown strums only using two strings. Suppose you are playing the G chord and using strum 7 from this chapter. It was shown with your thumb alternating from the 5th to the 4th string. In that strum, the following pattern of alternating your thumb sounds good:

5,4,6,3 (string 5, string 4, string 6, string 3)  
S S P P (secondary, secondary, primary, primary)

For the C chord you might use:

5,4,5,3 (in this chord, you shouldn't play string 6)  
P,S,P,S

In these and other chords, experiment and try different combinations that sound good to you.

Note that it is recommended not to play string 6 in C chord, although it is a valid note in the chord (E note also appears on string 1) The reason for not playing the 6th string is that it doesn't sound right - it is too far below the note on the 5th string to sound right.

The following is a listing of some strums. Hopefully you will be able to understand the notation well enough to choose a new strum and learn it from the list. Each strum is numbered, and you typically choose one strum you like with the same timing as the song you want to play. You then start the strum and repeat it endlessly, starting the song on the proper beat or count of the strum (see lesson {3}). Remember as you are learning, to pause where the chord changes (usually at the end of a strum), change chords then go back to concentrate on the strum again.

Don't feel that only one strum fits a given song. Pick the one or ones that fit best. You can even at times switch strums within a song for variety. Experiment and use what you like. There are many variations of strums 7 and 8 that are useful for fingerpicking guitar. This style will be discussed in chapter {12}.



# STRUMS FOR GUITAR

-----B- ---B-	-----R-- ---R-	-----B-B- ---B-B-	-----R-R- ---R-R-
-----B- ---B-	-----M-- ---M-	-----B-B- ---B-B-	-----M-M- ---M-M-
-----B- ---B-	-----I-- ---I-	-----B-B- ---B-B-	-----I-I- ---I-I-
-----T-- ---T-	-----T-- ---T-	-----T-- ---T-	-----T-- ---T-
----- ---T-	----- ---T-	----- ---T-	----- ---T-
-----	-----	-----	-----

1)    q q    q q    1b) q q    q q    2)    q q q    q q q    2b) q q q    q q q  
 2/4) 1 2    1 2    2/4) 1 2    1 2    3/4) 1 2 3    1 2 3    3/4) 1 2 3    1 2 3

---

-----D-U- ---D-U--	-----D-U-D-U- ---D-U-D-U--
-----D-U- ---D-U--	-----D-U-D-U- ---D-U-D-U--
-----D-U- ---D-U--	-----D-U-D-U- ---D-U-D-U--
----- ---T-----	-----T-----
-----T-----	----- ---T-----
-----	-----

3)    q    e e    q    e e    4)    q    e e e e    q    e e e e  
 2/4) 1 A 2 A    1 A 2 A    3/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A    1 A 2 A 3 A

---

-----D-----U-D-U-	In this---> -----D-----D-U--
-----D-----U-D-U-	strum, use  -----D-----D-U--
-----D-----U-D-U-	strings:     -----D-----D-U--
-----T-----	5,4 with C  -----0-H-2-----
-----T-----	6,5 with G7 -----T-----
-----	4,3 with F  -----

5)    q    q    e e e e    6)    q    q    e    e e e  
 4/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A 4 A    4/4) 1 A 2 A 3    A 4 A

---

## Travis Strum

-----M-----	-----M-----M-----
-----I- -----I--	-----I-----
----- -----	-----T-----
-----T-- -----T--	-----T-----T--
-----T-----	-----T-----T-----
-----	-----

7)    q    e e    e e e e    8)    q    e e e e q  
 4/4) 1 A 2 A    3 A 4 A    4/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A 4 A

---

-----M-----M-----	-----R-----	<- for
-----I-----	-----M-----M-----	House
-----T-----	-----I-----I--	of
-----T-----T--	-----	Rising
-----T-----	-----T-----	Sun
-----	-----	

9)    e e e e e e    10) e\* s q    e\* s q  
 3/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A    4/4) 1 a 2 p 3 a 4 p

Note the similarity between strums 8 and 9. If you did not know the timing, you might mistake one for the other. However, strum 8 is a 4/4 strum, while strum 9 is 3/4. Strum 8 has two pauses in it, while strum 9 has none.

# STRUMS FOR GUITAR (ARPEGGIOS)

-----R- -----R---	-----R----- -----R-----
-----M--- -----M-----	-----M---M--- -----M---M---
-----I----- -----I-----	-----I-----I--- -----I-----I-
-----T----- -----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
-----T----- -----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
-----T----- -----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----

11) e e e e e e e e  
 2/4) 1 A 2 A 1 A 2 A

12) e e e e e e e e e e  
 3/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A 1 A 2 A 3 A

-----R-- -----R---	-----R--R--- -----R-----
-----M-- -----M---	-----M--M--- -----M--M---
-----I-- -----I---	-----I--I--- -----I--I---
-----T-- -----T---	-----T-- -----T---
-----T-- -----T---	-----T-- -----T---
-----T-- -----T---	-----T-- -----T---

13) q q e e e e  
 2/4) 1 A 2 A 1 A 2 A

14) q q q e e e e e  
 3/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A 1 A 2 A 3 A

-----R-----R---	-----R----- -----R-----
-----M-----	-----M----- -----M-----
-----I-----	-----I-----I--- -----I-----I---
-----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
-----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
-----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----

15) e e e e q  
 3/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A

16) e\* s e\* s e\* s e\* s  
 2/4) 1 A 2 A 1 A 2 A

-----R--R--R---	-----R----- -----R-----
-----M--M-----	-----M--M--- -----M--M---
-----I-----I---	-----I-----I--- -----I-----I---
-----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
-----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----
-----T-----	-----T----- -----T-----

17) e e e e e e e e  
 4/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A 4 A

18) e e q e e q e e q e e q  
 4/4) 1 A 2 A 3 A 4 A 1 A 2 A 3 A 4 A